



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MEXICAN NATIONAL SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT
FOR HIS ROLE IN ALIEN SMUGGLING OPERATION**

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced today that 32 year-old Jose Francisco Sanchez-Angeles, the leader of an alien smuggling operation in Austin, was sentenced to life in federal prison.

"Today's sentence of life in prison shows that there is a high price to pay for those who traffic in human beings for money. Trafficking in people has become a lucrative business and, in some cases, a form of slavery. Human trafficking is a dirty and dangerous business that occasionally proves fatal to the immigrants. It must be stopped.

Sanchez and his crew of smugglers crammed 26 illegal immigrants in a house in North Austin and were holding them at gun point until they paid up. Federal law enforcement will aggressively prosecute smugglers and attack illegal smuggling operations every way that we legally can." **stated Sutton.**

On February 17, 2004, Sanchez-Angeles pled guilty to a five count federal indictment charging him with Conspiracy to Smuggle, Transport & Harbor Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, Harboring Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain, Providing a Firearm to Illegal Alien, Conspiracy to Use & Carry a Firearm During Crime of Violence, and Conspiracy to Commit Hostage Taking.

On July 17, 2003, Austin Police Officers responding to a 9-1-1 call encountered a hostage situation at 8500 Dungan Street. At the scene, officers witnessed a Hispanic male walking around the house carrying a shotgun and upon entering the house they found 26 illegal aliens from Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico, being held pending the payment of illegal smuggling fees of \$1500 - \$1800.

The illegal aliens cooperated with law enforcement and identified those people responsible for their false imprisonment and thereafter, on November 4, 2003, Sanchez-Angeles, aka "El Gato or Paco," was arrested by Immigration and Custom Enforcement agents in Houston, Texas. According to the witnesses, Sanchez-Angeles had driven a stolen black Ford truck in which the aliens had been smuggled to the Austin residence and where they were being detained pending payment of their smuggling fees. Sanchez-Angeles also provided the shotgun and ammunition to the co-defendants, the illegal alien "enforcers," to monitor the smuggled aliens.

Earlier this year, those "enforcers"—Erik Angeles-Mendoza, Felipe Ceron-Espinoza and Daniel Angeles-Mendoza—were sentenced to 108 months, 108 months and 78 months in federal prison, respectively.

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This case was investigated by the Anti-Smuggling Unit of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Austin Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney Gerald Carruth prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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